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Congress of the United States
Committee on International Relations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

1996

November 21, 1978

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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Honorable Cyrus R. Vance
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Members of the Committee on International Relations are deeply distressed and concerned over the tragedy which befell the mission to Guyana headed by the late Hon. Leo J. Ryan. As you know, there have been allegations that the Department of State was negligent in this affair.

In determining what steps might be taken in the wake of this matter, the Committee intends to look into all of the circumstances which might have a bearing on this tragic incident. It is, therefore, essential that the Department of State cooperate fully with the Committee in the conduct of this inquiry.

Specifically, we request a copy of the following: all cable traffic between the American Embassy in Guyana and the Department of State regarding the activities of the Peoples Temple Church and its agricultural commune in Jonestown since the establishment of the facility in Guyana; and all communications on the activities of the Peoples Temple Church which the Department has received from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other government agencies.

Additionally, we need answers to the following questions (unless such answers are contained in the materials requested above):

1. To what extent were the Department of State and the American Embassy in Georgetown, Guyana, aware of the potential physical danger to the Ryan delegation of a visit by them to Jonestown?

2. What advice did the Department of State and the Embassy in Guyana give Congressman Ryan with respect to the potential violence which could arise as a result of such a visit in view of the presence of weapons in Jonestown and the mood of its inhabitants with respect to visits by outsiders?

3. Once Mr. Ryan made known his intent to visit Jonestown, did the American Embassy request the Government of Guyana to provide the delegation with security protection or other assistance? If not, why not, and if so, what was the nature and extent of the response on the part of the Government of Guyana?

4. What communication facilities were available to the Ryan delegation during the members' stay in Georgetown and Port Kaituma? What special arrangements for communications with Jonestown, if any, were made for the Ryan delegation?

5. How many visits to Jonestown has the American Embassy made on behalf of U.S. citizens' inquiries since the inception of the settlement? What were the specific findings and results of these visits? Did the Embassy representatives have full and complete access to the inhabitants and facilities in Jonestown?

6. What information does the Department of State have with respect to the relationship between the Government of Guyana, its officials, and the Peoples Temple Church settlement in Jonestown and its facility in Georgetown?

7. Was the Department of State and/or the American Embassy aware of the presence in Jonestown of extensive quantities of firearms and ammunition? If so, was this information given to the Ryan delegation? Did the presence of the firearms and ammunition conform to relevant Guyanese laws? If not, what action, if any, did the Government of Guyana take with respect to the presence of the weapons?

8. Were the activities of the Peoples Temple Church investigated by the FBI and/or other U.S. Government agencies and, if so, were their findings made available to the Department of State?

9. What efforts were undertaken by the U.S. Embassy in Guyana to insure that American lives and property of the Jonestown inhabitants were adequately safeguarded?

10. Was the U.S. Embassy in Guyana aware of any reports of physical violence being directed against members of the Peoples Temple Church and, if so, was this information made available to the Department of State in Washington?

11. Was the Government of Guyana ever requested to investigate the activities of the Peoples Temple Church? If not, why not?

12. Did representatives of any U.S. Government agency interview individuals who had "defected" from the Peoples Temple Church in Guyana? If so, was this information made known to Congressman Ryan?

13. Was any consideration given to restricting the passports of potential inhabitants of Jonestown who applied for a passport for the purpose of going to Guyana pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 211a as amended?

It is respectfully requested that the information sought by the Committee be submitted not later than December 1, 1978.

With warm personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

Chairman

CJZ:jbd